

***Adela cuprella* ([D.&S.]) (Lep.: Incurvariidae) in Berkshire**

The night of the 29 March 1998 was forecast to be unseasonably warm (around 15°C), and dry. It was also a new moon, so I decided to take my light to Ashley Hill Forest at Knowl Hill near Maidenhead in Berkshire. By 19.30hrs I had my new 125w m.v. lamp set up on a sheet and running. As forecast, the night was uncommonly warm and at around 21.30hrs I noticed a male longhorn moth at rest on the sheet. Examination of this under m.v light indicated that it was probably an early example of the common species *Adela reaumurella* (Linn.) on account of its size, antennal length and apparent glossy metallic-green forewing coloration. However, for some reason I retained this moth, probably because of its early appearance. *A. reaumurella* normally flies from mid-May to June. At 22.00hrs a light drizzle that had started ten minutes or so earlier turned to heavy rain so I decided to pack up. On returning home and sorting the night's catch, which included an example of *Conistra rubiginea* (Dotted Chestnut), I came across the longhorn which I had all but forgotten about. Closer examination showed it not to be green but metallic gold and red. It was a perfect example of *A. cuprella*, a species not hitherto recorded from Berkshire. Baker (*Butterflies and Moths of Berkshire*, 1994) states that it is mapped for VC22 in *MBGBI 1*, but that he could find no evidence for its occurrence here. Martin Harvey (County Recorder, VC22) informs me that this species was found at Pamber Forest in Hampshire last year by Graham Dennis, but to his knowledge this is the first record for Berkshire.

A. cuprella is most often seen by day flying in sunshine around the tops of willow bushes during April. On the 31 March conditions were right and I returned to Ashley Hill Forest by day to look for further evidence of this species there. I arrived at around 13.00hrs and soon observed a group of around 20 male longhorns of an undetermined species in flight over a huge willow bush around 30 to 40 feet high, near to the spot I had run the light a couple of nights earlier. My eight-foot net handle was of no use, what was wanted was what anglers call a "roach pole". These are lightweight but strong fishing rods that are telescopic and up to 20 metres or so long. The cheap ones are made of fibreglass, reach five metres of usable length and can be had for around £15. A light-weight net can be attached. Unfortunately I did not have a "pole" at the time, so decided to survey the rest of the forest for short bushes. This proved a useful exercise as I saw similar moths, all apparently males from their flight pattern, over a wide area of the forest but all were at 20 feet plus. I stayed on and operated my light in the same spot as before, but to no avail save a second example of *C. rubiginea*. Subsequently the weather turned cold and windy for around a fortnight with hail and snow, and subsequent visits with a "pole" failed to locate further examples of the willow associated day-flying longhorns seen before.

I feel sure that *A. cuprella* was wide-spread at Ashley Hill Forest this spring, but unfortunately I am unable to confirm this due to my inability to positively identify the day flying moths I saw due to the altitude they were flying at. I will try again next year but *A. cuprella* is notorious for its fickle appearances, being common one year followed by years of apparent absence. Perhaps the unpredictable weather at this time of year, during the flight period of the adult, has a significance on this.

– I. SIMS, 2 The Delph, Lower Earley, Reading, Berkshire RG6 3AN.